

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2989

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS SECY PARTY FOR ASST SECY HARTMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: PRESENT ASSESSMENT OF PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION
FOR PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH VASCO GONCALVES

1. THE CRISIS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS, WHICH NOW SHOWS SIGNS OF
BREAKING, REPRESENTS MORE A FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICT BETWEEN THE
PARTY STRUCTURE AND THE RULING AFM THAN A LEFT-RIGHT CONFRONTA-
TION, ALTHOUGH COMMUNISTS PROBABLY SPARKED IT BEHIND
SCENES AND HAVE EXPLOITED IT TO INGRATIATE THEMSELVES EVEN
MORE WITH AFM. PRIOR TO ELECTIONS NO REAL CHALLENGE TO
MILITARY EXISTED; ALL PARTIES PROFFERED SUPPORT. NOW FOR THE
FIRST TIME AFM AND SOCIALISTS ARE TRADING BROADSIDES RATHER
THAN BEHIND THE SCENES SCORN AND MUTED PUBLIC CRITICISM. ON
BALANCE MILITARY WILL PREVAIL BUT AT A PRICE TO THEIR PUBLIC
IMAGE AND SUPPORT.

2. ELECTIONS ARE CLEARLY ORIGIN OF CRISIS. THEY RAISED THE
QUESTION, WHAT CONFERRED LEGITIMACY? THE AFM'S REVOLUTION
OR THE VOTE FOR THE SOCIALISTS? WHILE AFM WILL NOT GIVE UP
ONE INCH OF ITS AUTHORITY IT WISHES TO AVOID THE STIGMA OF ABOL-
ISHING THE PARTIES AND BECOMING AN OVERT DICTATORSHIP.

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3. THIS IS WHY SOME PAPERED-OVER COMPROMISE WILL PROBABLY

EMERGE WITHIN NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. GOP HAS PUBLICLY SAID IT WANTS A REPUBLICA NEWSPAPER TO REOPEN, BUT MATTER IS IN HANDS OF COURTS. FOR THEIR PART SOCIALISTS ATTENDED TODAY'S CABINET MEETING ON ANGOLA "ON AN EXCEPTIONAL" BASIS.

4. NEVERTHELESS THE MILITARY WILL EMERGE FROM THIS CRISIS, AS THEY HAVE FROM ALL CRISES EVEN MORE CONVINCED OF THEIR HIGHER MORALITY. THEIR DISDAIN FOR PARTIES IS ALMOST TOTAL. SOARES IS NOW ANATHEMA; MORE A EUROPEAN THAN A PORTUGUESE. MANY ARE ALSO RESENTFUL OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE PCP AND INCLINED TO SAY A PLAGUE ON ALL THEIR HOUSES (SARAIVA DE CARVALHO).

5. CUNHAL, KNOWING THIS, HAS SOUNDED THREE THEMES; (A) PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AFM (DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED FOR TONIGHT, (B) A WARNING THAT AFM NEEDS PCP AS THE ONLY RELIABLE LINK TO THE PEOPLE AND (C) A HINT THAT PCP WOULD AGREE TO THE ABOLITION OF PARTIES IF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IS CANCELLED AS WELL. IN OTHER WORDS THEY CONTINUE TO PLAY ALL THEIR CARDS ON RELIANCE ON AFM, BOTH PUBLICLY AND BEHIND THE SCENES.

6. AT LEAST SOME AFM MEMBERS ARE NERVOUS ABOUT THE PCP, BUT AFM BACKED ITSELF INTO A CORNER. IT IS RELUCTANT TO ABOLISH PARTIES AND BECOME OVERT DICTATORSHIP, YET IT CANNOT TOLERATE OPPOSITION. THE RESULT IS THAT EXTREMISTS WIN ONCE AGAIN. A WAY, THEY SAY, MUST BE FOUND TO BYPASS THE PARTIES. THUS THE MILITARY WILL TAKE ON AN EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED ROLE-- CULTURAL DYNAMIZATION, CIVIC ACTION AND POSSIBLY EVEN DIRECT POLITICAL CONTACTS, ANYTHING NECESSARY TO BYPASS THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. WE CAN EXPECT THAT THIS CAMPAIGN WILL BE RUN BY THE RADICALS IN THE MILITARY.

7. WHILE THIS LATEST STEP TO THE LEFT IS SO FAR PRINCIPALLY PSYCHOLOGICAL (PENDING A DEFINITION OF THE MECHANISM TO BYPASS PARTIES), THE MANIFESTATIONS OF WHO WON THE POWER STRUGGLE ARE AFM ASSEMBLY'S VOTE OF CONFIDENCE TO VASCO GONCALVES, YESTERDAY'S PROMOTIONS OF GONCALVES AND SARAIVA DE CARVALHO TO GENERAL RANK AND THE REDUCTION IN THE MILITARY RETIREMENT AGE TO 60 (COSTA GOMES IS 61).

8. THIS CRISIS WILL NOT BE THE LAST. SOCIALISTS, UNDER
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PRESSURE FROM RANK-AND-FILE AND EUROPEANS, WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR LARGER ROLE WITHOUT ILLUSIONS THAT SUCH ROLE WILL BE GRANTED. ANGOLA LOOMS LARGE AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE MOUNTING. SLOGANS, SONGS, AND SELF RIGHTIOUS MORALIZING CANNOT SUBSTITUTE FOR GOVERNING, AND THERE IS NO GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE STILL MODERATE VOICES WITHIN THE AFM, THE SOCIALISTS ARE STILL ALIVE, AND COSTA GOMES IS STILL IN PLACE, BUT THESE ARE WASTING ASSETS AS THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRISIS SEEMS TO

WORK CONSISTENTLY TO THE ADVANTAGE OF FORCES INIMICAL TO OUR
INTERESTS.
CARLUCCI

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECY PARTY FOR ASST SECY HARTMAN.

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